(a) if so, whether Government agree that poverty coupled with population growth are the main obstacles for the development of the country;

(b) whether Government also agree that a credible national strategy for removal of the mass poverty requires a strong commitment to acceleration of the economic growth and expansion of the employment opportunities in the framework of a sustainable use of natural resources;

(c) if so, whether Government have given serious thought on eradication of poverty; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) and (e) The Government has adopted a three pronged strategy for reducing poverty in the country. It comprises of (i) accelerated economic growth with a focus on sectors which are employment intensive; (ii) human and social development through provision of basic minimum services; and (iii) targeted anti-poverty programmes. The Tenth Five Year Plan envisages that if the GDP growth target of 8 percent per annum is attained, the poverty ratio would be reduced by 5 per centage points by 2007 and 15 percentage points by 2012 and 50 million employment opportunities would be generated over the period of five years.

Special status to Bihar

†3059. PROF. RAM DEO BHANDARY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(c) the criteria for according special category status to the states;

(d) the States which come in the special category status;

(e) whether Bihar and some other States fulfil the above criteria;

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† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(a) if so, whether Government are going to include these States including Bihar in the Special category State; and

(a) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI SATYABRATA MOOKHERJEE): (a) The Special Category Status is given to those States, which are having a strategic location on the border with neighbouring countries, hilly terrain, inadequate economic and social infrastructure, predominantly large tribal population and limited & weak resource base compared to development needs.

(a) Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya,- Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura and Uttaranchal have been placed in Special Cagetory for the purpose of Central Assistance for plan financing.

(b) and (d) No, Sir. Since the State of Bihar and other States do not fulfill most of these criteria, the Government does not propose to place them in Special Category States. However, while approving the Bihar Reorganization Bill, 1998 the Union Cabinet decided that a dedicated Cell be set up in the Planning Commission under the Charge of the Deputy Chairman to deal exclusively with Bihar. This Unit is to help in multi-faceted development of exclusively with Bihar. This Unit is to help in multi-faceted development of the State, especially with respect to core infrastructure, through better financial management and adequate devolution of funds from the Centre. A Bihar Cell has been set up in the Planning Commission in May 2000 and a senior Consultant was appointed to exclusively deal with the development of Bihar.

In order to supplement the socio-economic development efforts of the Bihar Government, it was decided that Special Central Assistance would be provided on a 100% grant basis through the Rashtriya Sam Vikas Yojana (RSVY) for critical schemes. The main strategy is to use a need based project approach. Professional agencies that adopt transparent and responsive systems to ensure visible, time-bound field level results will implement these projects. Funds will be released directly to the implementing agencies based on performance.